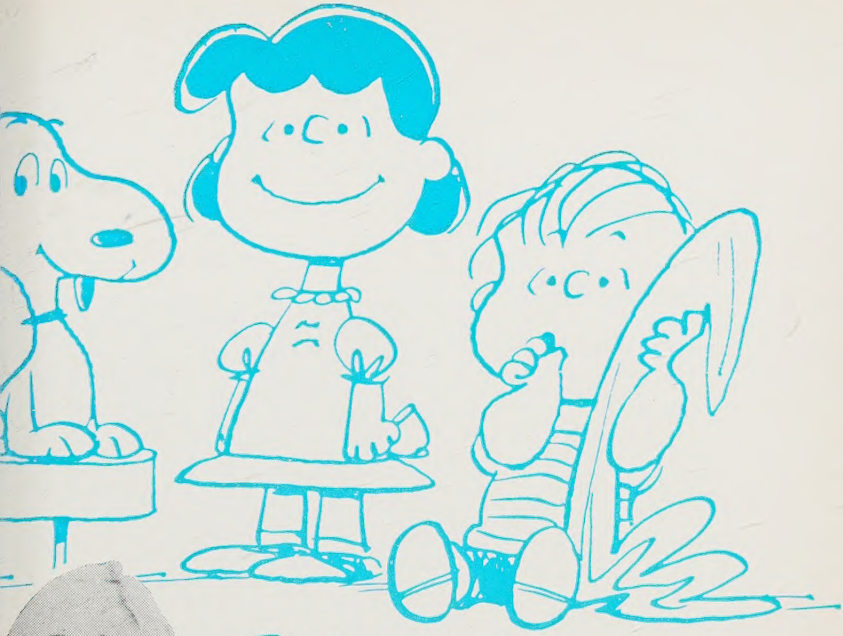
MAR 19 1968

Youth

MARCH 24, 1968

HAPPINESS IS TO DANCE WITH SNOOPY AND TALK WITH HIS CREATOR

Gathered around Cartoonist Charles Schulz are Terrie Davis, Terrie Theiss, Ken Schick, and Cathy Knight.



"Most of the time in Peanuts I'm merely trying to be funny"

In the dusk of early evening, the multi-lighted waterfall cast a storybook aura around the entrance to the modern studio set high on the rolling hillside. One of the girls sighs in awed astonishment. Our host smiles.

"People just can't seem to believe that cartoonists make this kind of money." The warmth of his droll response eases our uneasiness as we step into the outer office and then down a wide paneled corridor to his drawing studio. Our uneasiness is natural—we had wondered what it would be like to meet and talk with today's most successful comic strip cartoonist — Charles M. Schulz, creator of "Peanuts." The seven of us had

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Youth / Volume 19 Number 6

March 24, 1968

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YOUTH magazine is published for high school young people of the **United Church of Christ** and **The Episcopal Church**
An **Horizons** edition is published for young people of the **Church of the Brethren**
YOUTH is also recommended for use among young people of the **Anglican Church of Canada**

YOUTH magazine is published every other week throughout the year (except during July and August, when monthly) by the United Church Press. The *Horizons* Edition is distributed to Brethren youth by the General Brotherhood Board—Church of the Brethren.

Publication office: 1720 Chouteau Avenue, St. Louis, Mo. 63103. Second class postage paid at Philadelphia, Pa., and at additional mailing offices. Accepted for mailing at a special rate of postage, provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized June 30, 1943.

Subscription rates: Single subscriptions, $3.00 a year. Group rates, five or more to one address, $2.40 each. Single copies, 15 cents each, double issues, 25 cents.

Subscription offices: *United Church of Christ:* Division of Publication, United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1505 Race St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19102. *Episcopal Church:* Circulation Department. YOUTH magazine, Room 310, 1505 Race St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19102. *Church of the Brethren:* General Brotherhood Board, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, Ill. 60120.

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Cover art by Charles M. Schulz.

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driven 60 miles north from San Fra
cisco to Sebastopol, out into the cou
try, down Coffee Lane to this 28-ac
estate known as "The Coffee Grounds

We introduce ourselves. Mr. Schu
asks each of the four California youn
people where they live and are i
school. Cathy Knight of Tiburon an
Terrie Theiss of Mill Valley tell hi
they are seniors and Terrie Davis
Belvedere says she's a sophomore i
high school, while Ken Schick
Danville is a senior at San Anselm
Theological Seminary.

As I arrange the chairs in a sem
circle around Mr. Schulz's drawin
board, Rev. Frank Evans sets up th
tape-recorder and tests the positionin
of the mike. We all sit down. Cath
seems most at ease as she speaks firs

"When we discuss Shakespear in school, we can get 5000 differe
meanings out of one page," observe
Cathy. "Now when you create yo
comic strip, do you have somethin
specific in mind, or is it the way w
interpret it?"

"If we discussed individual strip
then I could tell you what they mean
he replies. "But for me broadly to te
you that everything I draw has
meaning, just isn't true. Most of th
time, I'm merely trying to be funn
But there are times when I am tryin

to point out something. The football-kicking episode which comes every fall, of course, would be a good example. Here's a young boy who is too innocent, too naive, and too trusting, dealing with somebody who is just too sure of herself. And he is incapable of combating her shrewdness. Charlie Brown, because of the qualities of his personality, simply cannot compete on the same level with Lucy. Maybe someday after he grows up, he will be able to compete with her. This is a parody on the fact that little boys and little girls generally are not equal at that age. It's also a parody on how society sometimes views the struggle that goes on between men and women and between different kinds of people."

"Will Charlie Brown ever grow up?" I inquire.

"Oh, no, no! That would be foolish." We all laugh. His voice is quiet, steady, clear. His eyes are quick to reflect his wit.

"How many strips do you do in a day?" Terrie Davis asks.

"I like to draw six daily strips in two days and then a Sunday page in a third day. A week's dailies in one day can be drawn, but this is a little too much. And if you take longer than two days for six daily strips drawn in the simple style that I do, this means that you're having trouble, you haven't been able to think of ideas, or else you're fiddling around with them too much. And this shouldn't be done, either. A Sunday page —unless it happens to be a very peculiar one involving all of the characters or something especially intricate—shouldn't take longer than about four hours for me to draw."

"Do you put the color in the Sunday strip?"

"I indicate the colors and the syndicate fills in the color."

"You do all the original art work?"

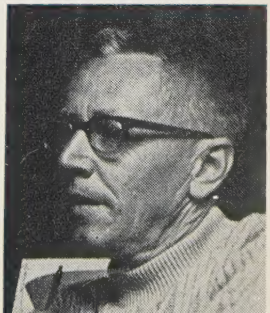
"I do everything."

"It's remarkable," says Cathy.

Mr. Schulz beams. "I'm a purist." We smile with him.

"Your strip goes into many different news-

why can't cartoonists preach, too?"



papers. How do you get your drawings to the papers?" asks Cathy.

"A comic strip is usually owned by a syndicate. Peanuts is owned United Features Syndicate in New York City. I draw the originals a mail them to New York. From then on it is the syndicate's job to ma mats of the strips, mail them out to each subscribing newspaper, and th bill that paper for the strips it publishes that month. The syndicate also h salesmen who go out and attempt to market the strip. So I do the creati and they do the marketing and distributing."

Ken moves forward. "How much of the writing and drawing do you on the books—for example, the *Happiness Is . . .* books?"

"Almost any Peanuts script that you see, I've done. The on scripts that I do not do are the Hallmark cards, because they want so ma of them that I simply cannot keep up with them. The drawings are tak from strips which I've done but their own people write the cards. Othe wise, almost any Peanuts things which you see I have thought of, or have least O.K.'d. And, of course, I have done every word of all those *'Happine* books. I get more mileage out of my gag lines than anyone else I kno Some of the lines I've thought of were first used in a comic strip, then on datebook, in a reprint book, in a reprint of a reprint, on a TV show, in t Broadway show, or in a song. I'll bet some of the lines have been used in many as ten different media."

"What's the appeal of the strip to so many people?" Ken inquires.

"I always find it difficult to answer that question. But I think the ma reason that the strip seems to be popular is that it's just plain funny a the characters are appealing. I really would like to know a little Char Brown, Linus, or Snoopy. They are good little guys. They would be f to have in your neighborhood."

"What about Lucy?" Terrie Davis questions.

"Well, Lucy is one of those clinkers in the world." Our laughter is o approval. "Was it Linus who said she's the crabgrass on the lawn of life

"Do you have a favorite character?"

"Linus, Charlie Brown, and Snoopy, and I like Lucy because of t fact that she provides me with so many ideas. I don't necessarily appro of her personality, but I really like Linus and Charlie Brown. Snoopy kind of frightening because he is so uncontrollable. And he's a little selfi

"Lucy is the crabgrass on the lawn of life"—Linus

too. He really isn't all he claims to be. He thinks he is so independent; he has all of these illusions of grandeur and he treats Charlie Brown so miserably. Actually, Snoopy is completely dependent upon Charlie Brown, but he pretends he isn't."

"Where did you get the Red Baron motif? Are you a pilot?"

"No. My son, Monte, was very interested in making World War I model airplanes. And one day I was just sitting at my drawing board like I am here now and he came in with his latest model plane. While we were talking about World War I planes, I just drew a little helmet on Snoopy and suddenly got the idea for it, and put him on top of the doghouse. I asked Monte to get one of his books about World War I planes he'd been reading. I thumbed through the book until we found the name—Sopwith Camel. That seemed to be the best. And that's how it all started.

"It really began as a parody of World War I movies. The line which I had originally thought I would use on the first page was the one which generally goes: 'But, Captain, surely you're not going to send young men up to die in crates like these!' But I never did use it."

"Have you decided what all is in Snoopy's doghouse?"

"No. One of the latest things I was thinking of was perhaps a postage meter." It struck a funny bone with us. "But I haven't drawn that yet."

"Why did you introduce Peppermint Patty?"

"I thought of the name one day and thought it a good name for some kind of character—maybe even for a book of stories. But I was afraid somebody else would think of the name and so I just created the character and gave her the name so that no one else would steal it before I used it. She's been very good in the animated shows. We used her and Snoopy almost exclusively in the February TV show because she works so well."

"In your strip you don't seem to deal with controversial issues," Ken says. "Are you trying to avoid them?"

"Give me an example of what you mean," Mr. Schulz inquires.

"Oh, like war, or sex, or something similar. Wouldn't Charlie Brown be interested in something like that?"

"Well, I suppose he will when he gets drafted." Several of us chuckle at his response. "Charlie Brown is like all of us. He simply does not think

about these things until the time comes. If Charlie Brown began to wor about sex at his age, I think we'd all be in trouble. There'd be somethin wrong with him. However, I touch upon these things within their ow realm of thinking and being. They have their little romances, but, course, they are caricatures of adult romances, although they are not cor pletely either adult or childish. Charlie Brown's adulation of the little re haired girl touches upon the fact that there are some people—maybe all us—who never really get to meet the little red-haired girl."

I recall, "In a recent strip, Lucy shouted 'police brutality' at Charl Brown when he was a safety patrol boy telling her to hurry."

"I had nothing special in mind," he answers. "I do have a policema friend in St. Louis who is quite disturbed because everything the police see to do they're accused of police brutality. So I just put this strip in."

I ask, "Do you think success will spoil Charlie Brown?"

"I suppose it could if we don't watch it very carefully, but we ha something going here which is different from others who are doing simil things. The difference between Peanuts and Batman, or Huckleberry Houn or all of the others who appear to be saturating the market, is that I st create everything. The others are done by committee or factories. Son are strictly in the business to make all the money they can from the toys ar side products, and the comic strips are merely drawn and sold to publici the side products.

"With us, the comic strip is still the No. 1 business and I will always b interested mainly in drawing the comic strip. The other things I do mere because they are fun and because people have approached us with ide which we think are good and interesting and won't cheapen the produc But I think as long as I continue to draw the comic strip and do not get to involved, then we're on safe ground."

"How well is Peanuts accepted overseas?" Ken asks.

"I don't know," is his reply. "A very small percentage of my mail come from foreign countries. About eight or nine years ago a London paper sai they didn't understand some of the things in the strip—such as baseba Hallowe'en, Groundhog Day. I just told them that I was merely drawin the things that I know and understand and there was nothing I could d about it. No one has ever said anything since."

"I get more mileage from my gag lines than anyone else I know"

"Do you get lots of fan mail?" Cathy inquires.

"Today I got 270 letters!"

"Is that average?"

"No. Today was one of those days," Mr. Schulz assured us. "Sometimes the mail piles up in different places—at a book publisher or at the syndicate —and then is forwarded to me in a bundle. Generally, since the *Life* magazine article about Peanuts, we average around 500 letters a week. It becomes quite a problem when you consider that almost every one of those persons wants something."

Terrie Davis asks, "Do you have a staff that helps answer them?"

"Just a secretary!" Our laughter is both sympathy and surprise.

"How do you handle all these requests?"

"I feel an obligation to be nice to people—first to people who are good enough to write as readers and, second, I feel an obligation of service."

"What kind of letters do you get?" I ask. "Any complaints?"

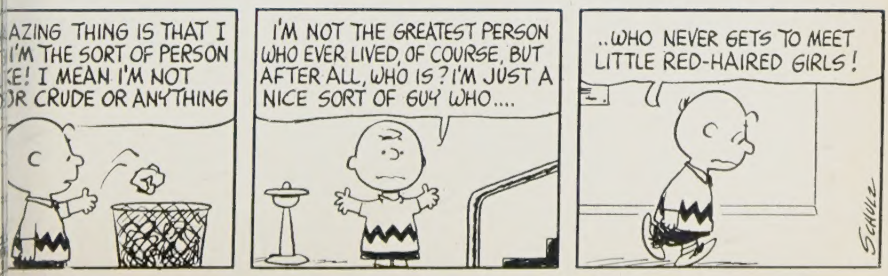
"Very few complaints. You may be interested in knowing, as long as we are religiously-oriented in this interview, that there is a tendency for the religious fanatics not to sign their letters. This is disturbing to me, and a point of interest which I've never been able to solve. But frequently they send you a note of complaint, or a tract, or some little book which they want you to read, but then they will not put a return address on it."

"What do they find wrong with Peanuts that they would criticize you?"

"Oh, one young fellow criticized me for using scripture in a comic strip because he felt that this was misusing something which was holy. I was criticized by one woman for the Great Pumpkin business, because she felt it was sacrilegious. And then there are always those who, as soon as they read in a magazine that you are at all interested in spiritual things, want immediately to convert you to their way of thinking. I'm always amazed by this, too. We are never satisfied that someone is already religious; we want them to go all the way and be religious just like you are or I am. This is another quirk to the religious mind."

"You say that some people say that quoting the Bible in a cartoon strip is somehow demeaning," Ken probes. "Do you feel there is a problem in mixing religion and humor in a cartoon strip?"

"Oh, no, because I think they have to be mixed. Religion without humor



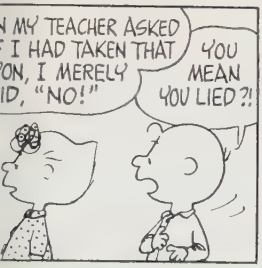
"religion with no humor is a worthless religion"

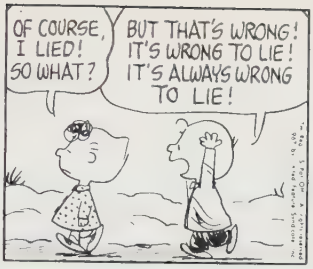
is a worthless religion. Humor is part of man and man never would hav survived without humor. It's the only thing that makes life palatable— that's the word. And to say that there's no room for humor in religion like saying there's no room for humor in life. The scriptures themselves hav quite a few incidents of humor—probably more than we realize, especial if we had the ability to go back and understand the cultures which co tain some of the occurrences reported in the Bible. Of course, I do believ that the scriptures are holy, but I do not believe that the Bible itself is holy instrument to be worshipped. After all, the words are only the wor which men put down under inspiration.

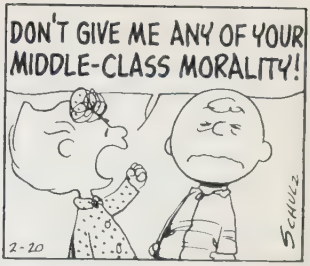
"To say that one medium cannot use scripture while other med can is robbing that one medium. We're always so eager to get the Word o to people, and yet you'll take something like this away from one of the grea est entertainment media ever invented. If they can use scripture on televisio movies, magazines or newspapers, why can't they use it in a comic stri If we are all members of the priesthood, why cannot a cartoonist preach the same manner as a minister, or anyone else? And from some of t preaching I hear on the radio, I think cartoonists should do more of it a the radio preachers should do less of it. I'm appalled at the outrageo preaching which goes on on the radio. Some of the hate preaching whic goes on in the guise of religion is really frightening."

Remembering that Mr. Schulz is a member of the Church of God (Ande son, Ind.) and a teacher of an adult church school class in the local Metho ist church, I am moved to ask, "As a person of faith, what do you fe is there in the Christian faith that speaks most clearly to the world today

"Always Jesus," he answers firmly. "I think the minute we begin to g away from Jesus himself, then we begin to cloud our theology. I am firm believer in the theology of 'Lord, let us see Jesus and Jesus onl This is why I refuse to go out and speak to groups as a so-called celebrit because I think anyone who becomes religious because somebody else religious, is already on the wrong track. A person should be converted b cause he has seen the figure of Jesus and has been inspired by him. A this is the only thing that makes a person Christian."







"Do you feel that there is this kind of clouding on the part of most church groups today?" Ken asks.

"I think our theology right now is so clouded that we are more confused now than the Scribes and the Pharisees ever were."

"How is theology being clouded today?"

"Well, the picking of a certain day as being more holy than another day or saying a certain food is more holy, arguing about whether or not we should speak in tongues, or about whether or not prayer should be in one language or another, or whether something is a sacrament or an ordinance, or whether Jesus is coming again or not coming again. We can list them by the dozens. It's frightening, isn't it? What have we done to this marvelous faith?"

"Charlie Brown isn't a very religious character, but he's a very human character," Ken says. "Do you think this is a mark of a Christian—to be human like Charlie Brown?"

"I think Charlie Brown is at least open to the speakings of the Spirit. I've never used him as being the religious one. Mainly, I've used Linus, because somehow it just works better that way. Linus seems to be the one who might have the mind for it. I never even thought about it. Somehow it works to have a smaller character say these profound things to a character who is a little taller, that's all."

"How do you get the feel that a strip you have done for that day is good and ready to publish?" Cathy asks.

"I was just thinking about that this very evening. I think this is all a part of the talent—to be able to have a certain common sense directing how far you can go with certain things. You have to sense this. The difficult thing is to draw something and wonder whether or not it is merely silly. Sometimes you just have to gamble—just go ahead and do it."

"What thoughts do you have for would-be cartoonists?"

"I think it's a most wonderful field. Anyone who likes to draw at all should certainly try to do it. The field is wide open. You don't have to know anyone to get in. It's simply drawing something funny enough for some editor to want to put it in his newspaper or magazine. I think young

people who are interested in doing work for their church will find tha church publications especially are in desperate need for someone to dra good original cartoons for the youth magazines. I drew cartoons for seve years for church youth publications until I finally got so bogged down wi things to draw I could not keep up any longer. I would like to do more, b I've never gotten around to doing them. They were a lot of fun."

"Is the comic strip as a medium is losing its appeal?" Ken asks.

"No, I think they are just as good as they ever were. We are missing few old-timers who have died and no one has replaced them. There is trend to go for a certain type of adventure strip these days, which is n very good at all. But there are enough good comic strips around for us say that comic strips are as good as they ever were. Perhaps there is ju too much competition from other media now. There is more to read tod compared to what we had to read in what we might call the 'golden ag in comic strips. Every medium seems to have its golden age."

"Who are some of these un-replaced old-timers?"

"Well, I think J. R. Williams who drew 'Out Our Way'; Percy Crosl who drew 'Skippy'; George Harriman and 'Krazy Kat'; E. C. Segar a 'Popeye'; and then there were 'Polly and Her Pals' and 'Claire Briggs.' The are the great people of the business. No one has really replaced them. A it's because comic strip artists are such rare people."

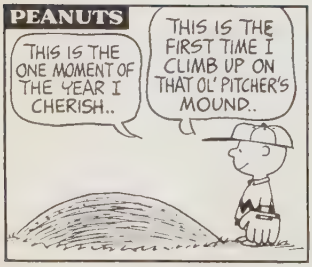
Cathy observes, "The adventure type of strips aren't funny, where Peanuts is funny and it's communicating ideas through humor."

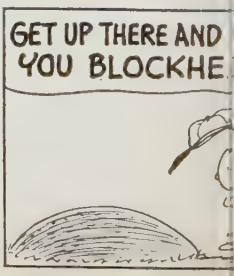
"It's hard to get someone who has the unique combination of the sever abilities necessary to draw comic strips—someone who can communicat who can draw, who has a sense of humor with common sense—to be ab to put all these things together and also have the drive to want so despe ately to draw a good comic strip and then to sustain it day after day aft day for the rest of his life."

"Are there any cartoonists who are still on target?" I ask.

"Oh sure! Mort Walker who draws 'Beetle Bailey,' Johnny Hart and h 'B.C.' and 'The Wizard of Id,' Gus Areola and 'Gordo,' Mel Lazarus a 'Miss Peach,' and, of course, Milt Caniff with 'Steve Canyon.' "

"Living and working out here in the country, do you consider the Peanu characters as country folk?" Cathy asks.





"No, I always think of them as living in a little housing development area of some kind in a two- or three-bedroom house."

"And a little back yard," adds Terrie Davis.

"In the Midwest?" I ask, remembering that he and his wife come from Minnesota.

"Probably Midwest, for no particular reason except maybe their language is the language I know. And also because the Midwest contains all four seasons. This is important to a comic strip."

"I never thought of that."

"You should have spring, summer, fall, and the snow."

"Why did you move to California?" Terrie Theiss asks.

"It's warmer." We all laugh.

Ken then asks a question that I hadn't quite shaken yet either.

"How do you handle success?"

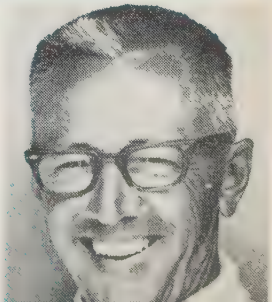
"I never think of myself as being successful, but people keep telling me I am," he paused momentarily, "and I'm beginning to believe it." Again we laugh. "Most of it I enjoy, but every now and then you get to the point where you'd like to be left alone a little bit. But it's not as bad as being Elizabeth Taylor or Mickey Mantle or somebody who is hounded so much they can't go anyplace. A cartoonist is never like that. In the first place, you're not recognized because your face is not that well-known, and you're not fascinating as a person."

"Do you ever find yourself trying to find the formula of your success and then simply creating by that formula?" I am curious.

"I never try to find that formula, but I realize something has happened. And it is hard to maintain that original light touch that has made your work liked. My solution is to go back to merely drawing silly, funny little drawings—always remembering that I'm not here to draw a philosophical comic strip, or to teach people, or to do anything but just make funny drawings. And so to get me back to the funniness of pictures, I get out my scratch pad and simply try to draw the characters with funny expressions, people flipping or snarling, a dog dancing or something like this. This usually gets me on the track again. If the other things want to come along, fine.

"Money is another way of measuring success," I note. "Does that ever bother you?"

"Snoopy is frightening because he's so uncontrollable"



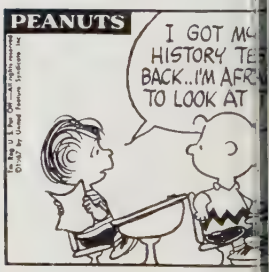
"Sure, because you wonder—obviously no one can be worth all this money—but you can't help it. You're just in a business where there are a lot of people who want the drawings and it makes money, and that's all. But it makes money for a lot of other people, too.

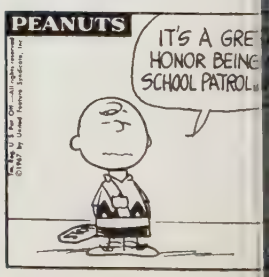
"Also, it's completely honest. We're not taking money from anyone who cannot afford it. You certainly can't cheat a newspaper editor. And we're not forcing anybody to buy something they don't want.

"One of the things I'm most proud of is that we have established a climate of—I don't know what would be the word—of good, clean humor and things which are decent. We've proved that things which are clean and decent can survive. *Happiness Is a Warm Puppy* sold more copies than any other book in 1963; 'You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown,' was one of the biggest hits on Broadway last year and still is; our television shows are watched by more people than most other television shows. Yet all of these things are good and clean and innocent. Why? They are just markets for something that people want. People are still clamoring for something like this."

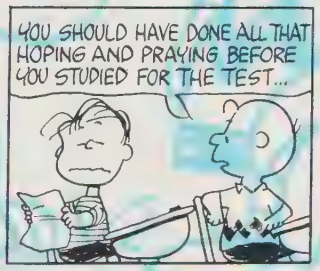
"And it all originates with you," I comment. "It must weight heavily on you."

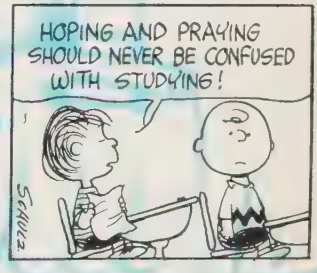
"Oh, it does! I don't worry so much about the responsibility as much as I worry—well, I'd hate to become obnoxious or let it go to my head. I'm a combination of an egotist and a humble person." The twinkle in his eyes sparks us to laugh. And he continues. "But you have to be an egotist to draw comics, just as an actor has to be an egotist. Why else would you think that you are beautiful enough that people would want to see your picture on the screen? Why else would you think the pictures you draw are funny enough that people would want to buy them to show them to other people? This takes a form of egotism. And I don't think there's anything wrong with this. I'll never forget Will Durant's line on the Apostle Paul—'He had to be what he was to do what he did.' And this is the same with all of us. We all have to be what we are in order to do what we are going to do." ▼

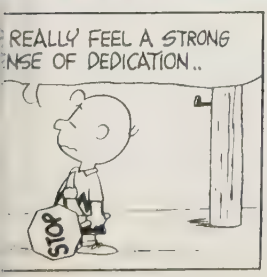


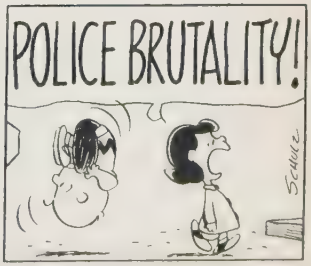


"people still clamor for decent and clean humor"









will success spoil Charlie Brown?

IN A MOST DELIGHTFUL COMIC STRIP Charlie Brown and his gang have won the hearts and minds of millions of people everywhere. And with success has come fantastic exposure in many media—newspapers, magazines, books of a wide variety, TV specials, records, off-Broadway shows, greeting cards, pillow dolls, sweatshirts, pajamas, wallets, toys, lunch kits and thermos bottles, fashion accessories, bedspreads, draperies, rugs, jewelry, toiletries, slides for optical viewing in Viewmaster, etc. Some of the fans and friends of Charlie Brown are wondering. In the daily and Sunday strips, Charlie Brown and his gang continue to be real, honest, sincere and endearing people. "Nevertheless, we are worried," says MAD magazine in a recent satiric look at the "Peanuts" people. "After all, Charlie and his gang are practically 'human'! So it's only a matter of time before terrible things start happening to them. All we'd like to know is: Will success spoil Charlie Brown?" And so MAD shows Shermy returning to his old neighborhood after months of being away. The following are excerpts from MAD's commentary. Do you agree?

. . . according to

MAD

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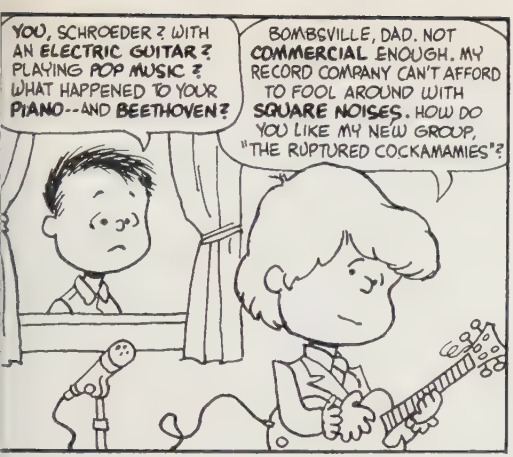
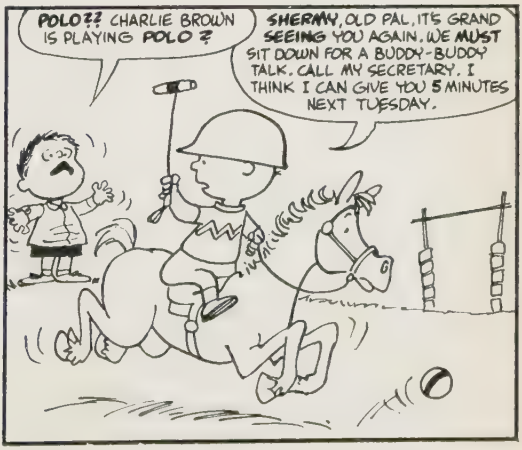

YOU, SCHROEDER? WITH AN ELECTRIC GUITAR? PLAYING POP MUSIC? WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR PIANO--AND BEETHOVEN?
BOMBSVILLE, DAD. NOT COMMERCIAL ENOUGH. MY RECORD COMPANY CAN'T AFFORD TO FOOL AROUND WITH SQUARE NOISES. HOW DO YOU LIKE MY NEW GROUP, "THE RUPTURED COCKAMAMIES"?

HERE COMES LINUS. HEY, LINUS, HAVE YOU SEEN CHARL-- LINUS, WHAT'S THAT? A MINK BLANKET?!

THERE'S PIG PEN. HI, PIG PEN... WELL, THANK GOODNESS YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THIS IS IMPORTED DUST.


POLO?? CHARLIE BROWN IS PLAYING POLO?
SHERMY, OLD PAL, IT'S GRAND SEEING YOU AGAIN. WE MUST SIT DOWN FOR A BUDDY-BUDDY TALK. CALL MY SECRETARY. I THINK I CAN GIVE YOU 5 MINUTES NEXT TUESDAY.

OH, NO. IT'S NOT HAPPENING. MAYBE IF I CLOSE MY EYES IT'LL ALL GO AWAY.

. . . according to

Feiffer

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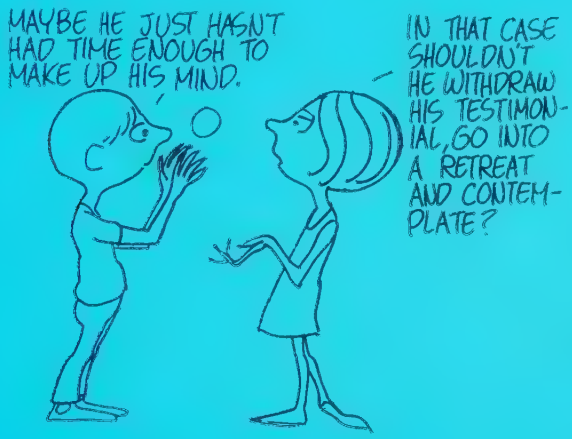

"YOU'RE GOING TO BE VERY HAPPY THAT 'YOU'R
A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE

YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN

CHARLIE BROWN ISN'T GOING TO BE
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THEATRE 80 ST. MARKS (WRITE IT DOWN
BEST SMALL COMBO IN TOWN . . . CH
OPENING UP ONE END OF HIS COMIC STR
FUNNY . . . UTTERLY WINNING."

"FRESHLY DELIGHTFUL . . . A CONTINUOUS PLEASURE . . . FUN AND CHARM ABOUND."

"PURE PLEASURE. THE CASTING IS INCREDIBLE
Norman Nadel, World Journal Trib

"AN ENDEARING ROMP IRRESISTIBLE!"
William Glover

"HAPPINESS IS SEEING 'YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN'— THE MOST DELIGHTFUL, WITTY, WARM, WISTFUL, FAMILY SHOW ON OR OFF BROADWAY!"
Allan Jefferys WABC TV

"A FRESH MUSICAL DELIGHT!" —Casper Citron, WRFM

"CERTAINLY THE MOST ENCHANTING EVENING OF THIS SEASON, OR FOR THAT MATTER, SEVERAL OTHERS OF RECENT MEMORY!" —John Wingate, WOR

"TAKE THE WIFE, TAKE
CHILDREN, TAKE THE O
FOLKS, TAKE THE S
WAY AND RUSH TO S
'CHARLIE BROWN'!"
George Oppenheimer Newsd
and Westchester Newspaper Gi

"HURRAY FOR 'CHARLIE'
DELIGHTFUL MUSICAL!"
William Raidy, Newhouse Newspap

"YOU'RE SORRY TO SEE
END!" Alvin Klein, W

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RIDDLE: When is an actor not a man?

ANSWER: When he is actor Bill Hinnant portraying Snoopy in the musical, "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown."

I really didn't believe it was possible.

All the reviews and articles describing the off-Broadway production of "Charlie Brown" said that the actors, who are all adults, were believably the characters in "Peanuts." But, I didn't think that could really be true.

Then, I saw the show. The curtain opened . . . and there they all were: Charlie Brown, Lucy, Schroeder, Patty, Linus, and Snoopy (especially Snoopy)—bigger than (comic-strip) life, but twice as real. I was not only convinced, I was enthralled and delighted. This musical revue of Charles Schulz's comic strip was much more alive and gave me much more the feel of "Peanuts" than any of the televised "Peanuts" specials have done.

The set was a collection of giant-sized children's block shapes, painted in bright block colors. One corner of the stage held Snoopy's doghouse, painted in those same bright colors. Changes of mood and time were done with lighting.

The show is more of a revue (a series of sketches) than a play. It pre-

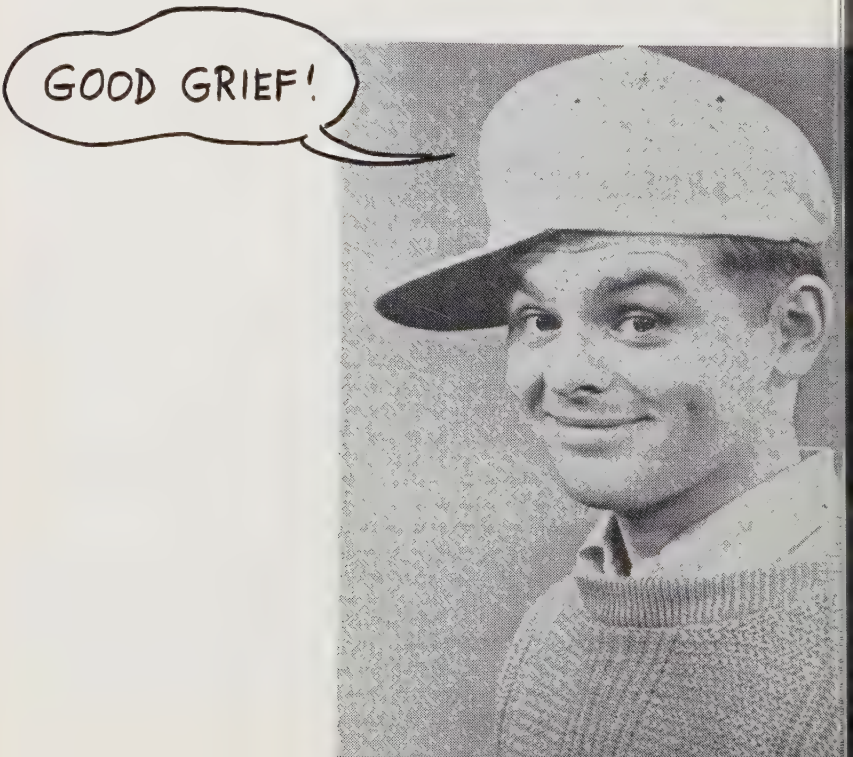
The cast to the "Peanuts" musical revue are (l. to r.): Karen Johnson as Patty, Reva Rose as Lucy, Bill Hinnant as Snoopy, Bob Balaban as Linus, Skip Hinnant as Schroeder, and Gary Burghoff as Charlie Brown.

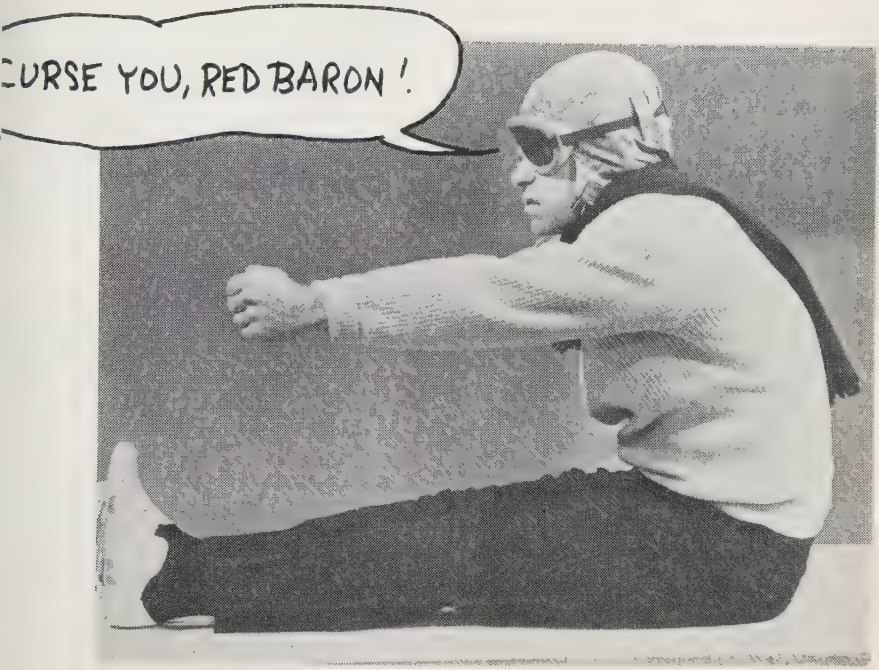
Photo: by Eisen

sents "a typical day in the life of Charlie Brown." The script is made up of various familiar "Peanuts" strips—there is Charlie Brown failing to fly a kite; wondering if he can get up enough courage to talk to "that little red haired girl;" and eating a lonely peanut butter sandwich lunch ("When you're really lonely, the peanut butter sticks to the roof of your mouth") There is Schroeder at the piano; Linus and his blanket; and Lucy being her bossy, fuss-budget self as she dominates Linus and gives advice to Charlie Brown—"Whatever it's worth, Charlie Brown, you're you." And there is Snoopy—being a ferocious jungle animal, resenting being called "fuzzy face," cursing the Red Baron, and dancing his way through suppertime.

You've read it all before. Seeing and hearing it is, however, not repetitious. It is, somehow, like visiting old friends and spending an evening remembering shared experiences.

What has been added to the strip scripts are some delightful musical numbers sung by one or another of the cast. One number which I felt was particularly well done was called "Schroeder." It was sung by Lucy, to the





accompaniment of a Beethoven sonata, as Schroeder played the piano. Lucy's purposefully off-key singing added beautifully to her character. Snoopy sang "Suppertime"—and the entire company joined in two songs—"You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" and "Happiness."

Music, acting, script—all were faithful to the Schulz cartoon which has become familiar to readers, not only across the country, but around the world. The show has the profound simplicity of one of Schulz's four-frame cartoon strips. The actors, without benefit of make-up, look like the characters they are portraying . . . not only that, they sound like them!

If you have a chance to see the show, either in New York (at Theatre 80 St. Marks) or one of the road company productions (now playing in Boston, San Francisco, Toronto, London or Stockholm), I'm sure you'll agree it was worth the time you spent seeing it. You'll probably also agree with the show's title and message—"You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown."

—LAURA-JEAN MASHRICK

The Gospel According to PEANUTS

A lack of a sense of humor has always plagued human beings, especially Christians. So often we lack the honesty and self-confidence to laugh at the absurdities of our world and the obvious inconsistencies within our own daily lives. So often we lack the compassion for our fellow man to use humor as healing, and not as abuse. So often we lack the understanding and patience to see that what we should propose as the answer to the world's ills is "folly," or "the foolishness of God," to use St. Paul's terms. When humor is honest, it points to reality, it heals hurt, and it shows a new way.

Honest humor is universal. Certainly few sources of humor today are more universal—both in insight

Cartoons copyright by United Feature Syndicate

and in appeal—than the popular *Peanuts* comic strip. And no person has done more to help us probe the deeper truths of *Peanuts* than Robert L. Short in his best-selling book, *The Gospel According to Peanuts.* A recent Bantam Book paperback edition of the original record-breaking John Knox Press edition of Mr. Short's book will undoubtedly make it become one of the most popular books on theology ever printed. And sometime in the future we are promised by Mr. Short a book of "parables in *Peanuts.*"

In noting the "lessons" to be learned throughout *Peanuts,* Mr. Short makes it very clear that he is not trying to prove that Cartoonist Charles Schulz, the creator of *Peanuts,* had these ideas—or anything remotely close to them—in mind when he did his cartoons.

"The basis for a Christian criticism of art is the same as the Christian criticism of anything—witness," observed Mr. Short in *Motive* magazine. "The job of the Christian art critic—pro or amateur—is not so much to tell us what the artist is 'saying' as it is to tell us what the artist has said to *him*—and why. It may be that the critic's version of the work of art coincides precisely with the artist's version. Then again, it may not."

And what does *Peanuts* say to Critic Robert Short—and why?

The "whole trouble" starts with what man is—he isn't what he ought to be when he's born into this world. "I do not understand my own actions,"

says St. Paul (Rom. 7: 15, 18). "For I do not do what I want, but I do th very thing I hate. . . . For I know that nothing good dwells within me, tha is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it."

In a parable of today, Charlie Brown says to Lucy, "All it would take t make me happy is to have someone say he likes me." And Lucy replies "Are you sure?" And she repeats the question in detail. "That's not askin much," she continues. "But are you sure now? All you want is to hav someone say, 'I like you, Charlie Brown,' and then you'll be happy?"

"And then I'll be happy," Charlie responds in great anticipation.

"I can't do it!" Lucy says—and walks away.

St. Paul goes on to say, "For I delight in the law of God in my inmos self, but I see within me another law at war with the law of my mind an making me captive to this law of sin which dwells within me."

Lucy also sees this "war" and she almost out-Pauls Paul when she draws two-sided heart on the fence for her brother's edification: "This, Linus, is picture of the human heart! One side is filled with hate and the other sid is filled with love. These are the two forces which are constantly at wa with each other. . . ." Linus holds his hands over his chest, his tongue hang out, and his face is contorted as he says,"I think I know just what you mea . . . I can feel them fighting."

Charlie Brown is described by Mr. Short as "the 20th Century representa tion of Everyman with his T-shirt of thorns." The psalmist surely mus have had him in mind when he wrote, "Insults have broken my heart, so tha I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comfort, bu I found none" (Ps. 69: 20). Yet it is Charlie Brown who says, "But adver sity is what makes you mature. The growing soul is watered best by tear of sadness."

"Good grief" may seem to be a contradiction in terms, writes Mr. Shor "but actually there are two distinct types of grief—good and not-so-goo grief: 'For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation an brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death' (2 Cor. 7: 10). Conse quently Christians can call the day on which Christ was crucified '*Goo* Friday.' For just as the cross was the shadow through which Christ had t pass in order to overcome death, suffering is also the necessary path for an man who wishes 'to walk in newness of life.' "

What then turns even grief into good? How is one made at ease wit being nothing? What transforms losing into winning? Decidedly, Chris tianity knows nothing among men "except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2: 2). And so we turn to Christ. And who is the Christ image i *Peanuts*—that element of redemption? It is here that Mr. Short makes hi most interesting observation, for he turns to Snoopy. He hesitates to ca Snoopy "Christ," but, says Mr. Short, Snoopy comes closer to being "a littl Christ"—that is, "a fairly drawn caricature for what is probably the typica Christian."

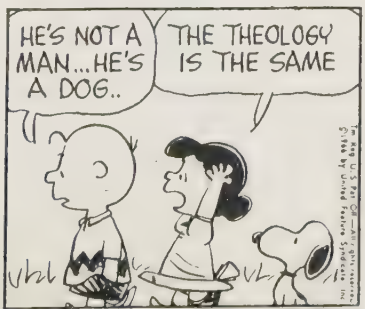
Continuing his analysis, Mr. Short says, "Snoopy, as a little Christ, quit obviously takes on Christ's ambivalent work of humbling the exalted an

exalting the humble, 'that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind' (John 9: 39) as Jesus put it. . . . None of the popular false gods of the *Peanuts* patch are secure when Snoopy is around. He is a 'hound of heaven' . . . who uses his snoopy nose to smell out faults not immediately discernible to the eye." Snoopy tells us, "The eye can be deceived, but the nose knows!"

Snoopy, like the Lord, "wounds, but he binds up; he smites, but his hands heal" (Job 5: 18). On the one hand, Snoopy unnerves Linus by suddenly snatching his blanket away from him, and yet on another occasion Snoopy is the hero who finds the lost blanket for Linus in his moment of desperation. As Linus hugs him, Snoopy thinks, "Every now and then I feel that my existence is justified!"

And it is Snoopy who seems to know the joy inherent in the humiliations that come with being a dog: "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6: 22). And Snoopy is constantly "leaping for joy."

These are merely samplings of observations made by one comic strip fan who reads *Peanuts* religiously. To give his case a better hearing, read his book. But whether you agree or disagree with Mr. Short, whether you're a *Peanuts* friend or not, you cannot laugh off honest humor as a serious means of communicating Christ's gospel. ▼



two by

Reflecting the same deep insight as found in his "Peanuts" comic strips, Car toonist Charles Schulz has done a number of church-oriented cartoons for Warne Press, the publisher of books and periodicals for his own Church of God, Ander son, Ind. For example, he has illustrated a book about children, **Two-By-Four**, co authored with Kenneth F. Hall. Three cartoons from that book appear here.

"How could a loving God ever made big brothers?"

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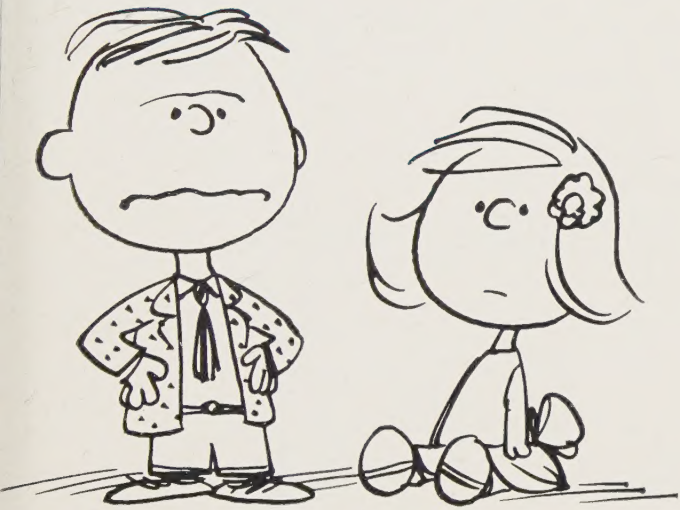
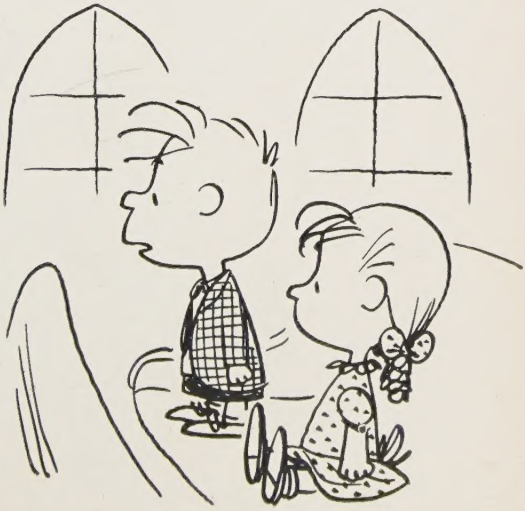
fours to . . .

"The more mature I get, the more childish the rest of the world becomes!"



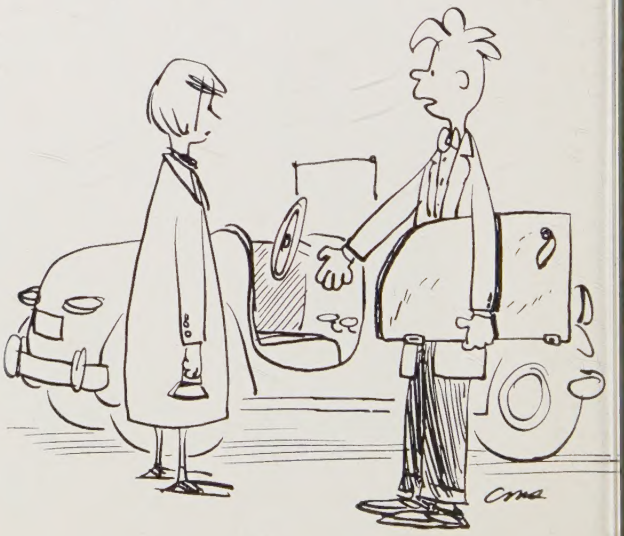


"Where are all the hypocrites? I've always heard that the church is filled with hypocrites!"

young pill

For seven years Charles Schulz drew a monthly series of cartoons about teen-agers, which appeared in Protestant youth publications, including YOUTH magazine. These cartoons have been collected in three paperbacks by Warner Press—**Young Pillars, Teen-Age Is Not a Disease,** and **What Was Bugging Ol' Pharaoh?** All are available at your denominational bookstore. And now Bantam Books has also published a paperback reprint of the best of these teen-age cartoons, entitled **Teenagers Unite!**

"It's my big brother's sweatshirt. I thought for sure it would fit me if I rolled up the sleeves!"



"Step right in. . . . I'll hold the door for you!"

"You are my Dad. . . . I am your son. . . . Isn't that a thrilling thought? How about letting me use the car tonight?"

TO DANCE IS TO LIVE; TO LIVE IS TO DANCE

Happiness is to laugh at the absurdities of your own life. Happiness is to know that someone sees hope in a world of darkness. Happiness is to relax when you've been tense all day. Happiness is to enjoy life at its deepest. Happiness is to be as a little child—to pierce life's complexities and confusions with simple insights and faith—to see love as each human being's major life-line—to be in awe of the star-studded skies at night—to look eagerly for the new day as the sun rises tomorrow—to revel in the everyday joys of a blanket and thumb, a doghouse and dreams, a baseball game without winning, and a fuss-budget sister who always complains. Happiness is to read "Peanuts" and say "That's so true!"